Part II

Theory-Based Approaches to Moral and Character Education
SOCIAL COGNITIVE DOMAIN THEORY AND MORAL EDUCATION

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What is morality in any given time or place? It is what the majority then and there happen to like and immorality is what they dislike.

Alfred North Whitehead

The above quotation by Alfred North Whitehead sardonically expresses the conventional view of morality that has tacitly guided traditional approaches to character education dating back to the seminal work of Emil Durkheim (1925/1961). This conception of morality carries with it an implicit theory of socialization that places morality outside of the child and calls upon agents of socialization such as parents and teachers to imbue the child with “moral values” through role modeling, emotional attachment to groups, and appropriate uses of rewards and consequences. While this inculcation perspective has a long history and continues to have advocates (see Arthur, this volume), it sits in direct contrast with current understandings of educational processes in virtually every academic subject area from reading (Shanahan, 2000) to mathematics (Saxe et al., 2010; Schoenfeld, 1994). Contemporary research-based accounts of learning view the child as an active interpreter of information and general experience, and researchers and many educational practitioners advocate constructivist approaches to teaching. Ironically then, proponents of traditional character education are advising teachers to ignore educational research and engage in practices that contradict methods of teaching that they employ with every other aspect of instruction.

In addition to being at odds with contemporary educational practices, the traditionalist reduction of morality to the acquisition of the norms and conventions of society mischaracterizes morality and the process of moral development. In this chapter, we will present an alternative account of moral development and moral education, referred to as social cognitive domain theory (Smetana, in press) that draws a distinction between...
morality and matters of societal convention and personal choice. Following an overview of basic theory and research, we will describe how domain theory can be applied to educational practice.

**DOMAIN THEORY**

*Morality and Social Convention*

Domain theory maintains that social knowledge is constructed within basic conceptual frameworks to account for qualitatively differing aspects of social and psychological experience (Turiel, 1983). Individuals’ concepts and judgments about morality center on actions that have an impact upon the welfare of others. Morality is structured by underlying conceptualizations of justice, welfare, and rights (Turiel, 1983, 2002). Morality is distinguished from societal conventions, which are the consensually defined norms of conduct that regulate the social interactions of members within a particular social group. Concepts and judgments about social conventions (e.g., addressing teachers by titles such as Mr. or Mrs.) are structured by underlying understandings of the role of social norms in lending predictability and coordination to social interaction and the structuring social organization (Turiel, 1983, 2002). A basic premise of domain theory is that our understandings of morality and convention form distinct conceptual systems throughout development (Smetana, in press).

The positions taken by domain theory contradict the assumptions of moral development maintained by Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1984), for whom moral development entails a progressive differentiation of morality (fairness) out of earlier stages in which morality is defined by social norms and authority. According to these earlier theories, morality supersedes and operates independently of convention only at the more advanced stages of moral autonomy (Piaget, 1932) or post-conventional thinking (Kohlberg, 1984). Numerous studies, however, conducted in a wide range of cultural contexts over the past 35 years have provided evidence that children as young as two-and-a-half years old (Smetana & Braeges, 1990) and adults maintain conceptual distinctions between issues of morality and societal convention (Smetana, in press; Turiel, 2002).

Studies have also examined whether the distinction between morality and convention extends to reasoning about religious norms (Nucci, 1985; Nucci & Turiel, 1993). In those studies, Christian and Jewish children were asked whether actions considered wrong within their religious traditions would be all right if scripture had not included information that God had an objection to the act. Findings from this research revealed that nearly all of the children and adolescents interviewed felt religious restrictions that are similar to secular conventions would be all right if there were no religious rules or biblical injunctions regulating the acts. These actions included such things as working on the Sabbath, a woman leading worship services, Catholic priests marrying, or not wearing head coverings during worship. On the other hand, at least 80% of participants maintained that moral acts such as stealing from another person, unprovoked hitting, slander, or damaging another’s property would continue to be wrong even if God or scripture had been silent about the act. The findings of these studies with Catholics, Amish, Dutch Reform Calvinists, and Conservative and Orthodox Jews indicate that concepts of morality do not depend on adherence to a religious faith. They also are important for moral education in liberal democracies because they demonstrate that
an educational focus on morality can be achieved in public schools independent of students’ religious affiliations.

A basic assumption underlying the proposal that morality and convention emerge as distinct conceptual frameworks is that they account for qualitatively differing and fundamental aspects of social experience (Turiel, 1983). Evidence in support of this proposition has been obtained in observational studies of children’s interactions with one another and with adults in preschool (Killen & Smetana, 1999; Much & Shweder, 1978; Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Nucci, Turiel, & Encarnacion-Gawrych, 1983), elementary school (Nucci & Nucci, 1982a), playground activities (Nucci & Nucci, 1982b), and in home settings (Nucci & Weber, 1995; Smetana, 1989). What these studies uncovered is that interactions having to do with morality tend to focus on the effects those actions have upon the welfare of others. In the case of moral events, children experience such interactions as victims, perpetrators, or third person observers. Interactions around societal conventions, in contrast, tend to focus upon the norms or rules that would apply, along with feedback regarding the social organizational function of the norm (e.g., to maintain classroom order).

These domain-related patterns of social interaction are also associated with differing forms of emotional experience and expression (Arsenio & Lover, 1995). Moral transgressions, especially among young children, are often accompanied by strong emotions of anger or sadness as well as empathy for victims. Positive moral interactions such as sharing are associated with emotions of happiness. Social conventions on the other hand arouse little affect among children. This holds for situations in which children both comply with and violate social norms (Arsenio & Lover, 1995). Negative emotional expressions over violations of convention tend to come from adults rather than children.

In recent years, these discoveries of the early emergence of basic moral concepts and their apparent universality has led some scientists to speculate that morality is largely based upon inherent biological tendencies that are the result of our evolutionary history (Krebs, 2011). This basic distinction is maintained even by children suffering from autism (James & Blair, 2005; Leslie, Mallon, & DiCorcia, 2006). There is strong evidence that infants are sensitive to the emotional distress of others (Martin & Clark, 1982) and capable of identifying facial expressions conveying particular emotional states (Ludemann, 1991), all of which is consistent with the view that humans are primed to respond with empathy towards others (Emde, Hewitt, & Kagan, 2001). These early intuitions, however, do not qualify as moral knowledge, and they do not account for the developmental changes in moral reasoning that we see in children and adolescents. This evolutionary priming forms part of the early experience that children employ in constructing moral concepts, and the related emotions and feelings incorporated within early moral schema also undoubtedly play a role in moral motivation (Arsenio & Lover, 1995). Over the course of a lifetime, the cognitions constructed around moral experiences alter or enter into the regulation of affect and the final appraisal of social situations (Pizarro & Bloom, 2003). Moral development and effective moral education incorporate emotion as part of the informational and affective experiences that generate reflection and the construction of moral knowledge and reasoning.

More recently, researchers employing neuroscience methodologies have provided evidence that individuals evoke different cognitive processing for moral and conventional social judgments ( Lahat, Helwig, & Zelazo, 2012). These researchers caution, however, against over-interpretation of their findings as indicative of an innate neural
substrate for moral or conventional judgments and point instead to the likelihood that implicit cognitive processing, executive functioning, and cognitive load are differentially implicated in moral and social conventional reasoning in distinct domains (Laht et al., 2012). In sum, the basic finding of a conceptual distinction between morality and convention has proven to be among the most robust phenomena uncovered by psychological research.

The Personal

Within domain theory morality and social convention are further differentiated from judgments about issues that individuals consider to be personal (Nucci, 1996, 2013a). While morality and convention deal with aspects of right and wrong and with interpersonal regulation, concepts of personal issues refer to the private aspects of one’s life such as the contents of a diary and issues that are matters of preference and choice (e.g., friends, music, hairstyle). It has been proposed that the establishment of control over the personal emerges from the need to establish boundaries between the self and others and that this need is critical to the establishment of personal autonomy and individual identity (Lagattuta, Nucci, & Bosacki, 2010; Nucci, 2013a). Interview studies have shown that children and adolescents in multiple cultures judge personal issues to be within their jurisdiction regardless of parental decisions. Evidence has also been presented that parents across a wide range of cultures (Assadi, Smetana, Shahmansouri, & Mohammadi, 2011; Lins-Dyer & Nucci, 2007; Nucci & Smetana, 1996; Nucci & Weber, 1995; Yamada, 2004; Yau & Smetana, 2003) provide for a zone of personal discretion and privacy with children as young as three to four years of age (see Nucci, in press a, for a comprehensive review). Justifications that children and their parents provide concerning why behaviors and decisions should be treated as personal and within the children’s jurisdiction focus on the role of such choices in developing autonomy, personal identity, and moral rights of the children or adolescents to have such discretion (for reviews see Nucci, in press a; Smetana, 2011).

Observational studies of mothers and young children in American middle class homes have explored the social interactions between parents and young children around personal domain issues (Nucci & Weber, 1995). The research indicates that parents provide opportunities for children to engage in choice around decisions about food, dress, play activities, and playmates. Mothers also tend to negotiate with children in situations involving resistance by the child to maternal commands around issues such as clothing choices that have a substantial personal component. Mothers were observed negotiating with their children over these personal events 51% of the time. However, they only negotiated with the children 1% of the time about moral or conventional issues (Nucci & Weber, 1995). The findings are consistent with the results mentioned above indicating that parents respond differentially to their children’s personal, moral, and conventional domain behaviors.

DEVELOPMENT WITHIN DOMAINS

Conceptual development within each of the domains just described follows a distinctive pattern. Development of morality is structured by changes in underlying conceptualizations of justice and human welfare (Damon, 1977; Nucci, in press a; Nucci & Turiel, 2007). Development of convention is structured by underlying conceptualizations of social systems and social organization (Turiel, 1983). Finally, development of concepts
about the personal is structured by underlying conceptions of self, identity, and personhood (Nucci, 2001, 2009). It is beyond the scope of this chapter to present a detailed description of each developmental sequence. What follows are descriptions of general patterns for development of morality and convention with references to sources where detailed descriptions can be found.

**Moral Development**

Morality begins in early childhood with a focus upon issues of harm to the self and others. Davidson, Turiel, and Black (1983) found that, up to about age seven, moral judgment is primarily regulated by concerns for maintaining welfare and avoiding harm and that it is limited to directly accessible acts. Young children's morality is not yet structured by understandings of fairness as reciprocity. Thus, young children have a difficult time making moral judgments when the needs of more than one person are at stake (Damon, 1977). In addition, there is little subtlety in young children's concepts of moral harm and in their moral evaluations of situations involving helping others (Eisenberg, 1986; Nucci & Turiel, 2007). Research on children's distributive and retributive justice reasoning shows that, as they develop, children form increased understandings of benevolence, equality, reciprocity, and equity (Damon, 1977, 1980; Irwin & Moore, 1971; Lapsley, 1982). The pattern of development reflects an increased ability of children to coordinate elements of moral situations within their justice reasoning. In the case of distributive justice, this increased capacity to handle complexity leads to a linear growth pattern of steady incremental changes in moral thinking. When it comes to reasoning about issues of human welfare, however, the developmental pattern is more complex.

Recent studies of children's reasoning about situations involving harm or helping behavior indicate that concepts about moral culpability and obligation follow a U-shaped pattern rather than a linear one. As we saw above, very young children understand that unprovoked hitting and hurting are morally wrong. As one would expect, reasoning about this straightforward moral transgression does not change with age (Nucci, in press a; Nucci & Turiel, 2007). What does change, however, are children's concepts about indirect forms of harm such as not letting another person know that he or she has dropped money and keeping it for oneself instead. When this situation is placed in a real-life context, eight-year-old children and 16-year-old adolescents are more likely to judge keeping the money as wrong than are 13-year-olds. Moreover, 13-year-olds are far more likely to claim that they would have a right to keep the money (Nucci, 2013a; Nucci & Turiel, 2007). Interestingly, 13-year-old children are as likely to return the money as eight- and 16-year-olds when the person who drops the money is described as handicapped. Across ages, nearly all children agree that it would be wrong to keep the money in that case. Thus, the reasoning of the 13-year-olds does not fit a pattern of purely instrumentalist moral thinking. Instead, several factors related to their increased understanding of the social world are converging to make the moral evaluation of the situation more variable. Development allows young adolescents to recognize the moral ambiguity of non-prototypical situations. In this case, the loss of the money did not occur because of an action taken by the observer. Furthermore, in the absence of an observer, the money would have been lost in any case. To quote one of the adolescents in the study, “It's [the money] in never land.” Added to this moral ambiguity is the confusion adolescents experience as they sort out the differences in meaning among free will, personal choice (as in the personal domain), and a moral right to do something. For the
eight-year-olds, there is no problem; the situation holds no ambiguity. There is a simple line drawn between the money and its owner. By age 16, most of the adolescents in the study had resolved the complexities identified by the 13-year-olds and, after acknowledging the ambiguities inherent in the situation, judged that the act of observing rendered the bystander obligated to return the money.

Similar U-shaped developmental patterns were found for helping behavior in early adolescents (Nucci & Turiel, 2007) and again in young adults (early twenties) (Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy, & Shepard, 2005). These fluctuating patterns of development signal periods of increased attention to new elements of moral situations and mark transitions to more complex integrations of moral thought (Gerskoff & Thelen, 2004).

Social Convention

The development of concepts about convention presents an oscillating pattern between periods—phases affirming the importance of convention and phases negating the basis of the affirmations of the prior phase. Seven levels of development have been described from early childhood to early adulthood (Turiel, 1983). Evidence for these levels comes from cross-sectional (Nucci, Becker, & Horn, 2004; Turiel, 1983), cross-cultural (Hollos, Leis, & Turiel, 1986), experimental (Nucci & Weber, 1991), and longitudinal studies (Hollos et al., 1986). Concepts about convention reflect the person’s underlying conceptions of social organization. A typical 10-year-old, with a concrete sense of social hierarchy, affirms convention as serving to maintain social order. For example, people in charge of schools make up rules to keep everyone from running in the hallways.

At the next level of development, typical of early adolescence, children enter into a negation phase in which the prior basis for affirming convention becomes viewed through the lens of the arbitrariness of the norms and their status as “simply” the dictates of authority. Later, in middle adolescence, the dismissal of convention is replaced by an understanding that conventions have meaning within a larger framework. Thus, conventions are seen as normative and binding within a social system of fixed roles and obligations. The oscillating pattern of development of convention indicates the difficulty children have in accounting for the function of arbitrary social norms and illustrates the slow process of reflection and construction that precedes the adolescents’ view of convention as important to the structuring of social systems.

Personal

Age-related changes in concepts about personal issues reflect shifts in children’s and adolescents’ understandings of “self” and the role that control over one’s personal domain has for constructing and maintaining autonomy and personal identity (Nucci, 1996). With age, children move from views of the personal zone in terms of physical appearance, characteristic activities, and personal friendships to a deepening sense of personal choice and privacy as essential to the establishment of an interiorized “self” comprising one’s personal thoughts, preferences, and tastes that are manifested in one’s outward appearance, actions, and relationships.

An aspect of development of the personal is the expansion of what children and adolescents consider as personal matters under their own control instead of parental or societal authority (Smetana, 2011). These shifts are primarily around issues of safety or conventions of dress and other forms of personal expression that children and adolescents increasingly view as important to their sense of autonomy and emerging individual identity.
CROSS-DOMAIN INTERACTIONS AND COORDINATIONS

In making decisions in everyday life, people make use of the social knowledge systems that will help them understand problems or situations. Some social behaviors, such as unprovoked hitting of another person, are clear-cut moral situations that require only the application of moral knowledge to make a decision. In a similar way, we could describe situations that would involve the application of knowledge about social convention. Many social situations, however, contain elements that may draw upon one or more conceptual frameworks. This can occur when elements of fairness or human welfare intersect with societal conventions or when conventions impede or regulate what the individual considers a personal matter.

An historical example of domain overlap between morality and convention would be the Jim Crow laws that segregated Whites and Blacks in the United States in the last century. While Jim Crow laws are a part of the past, many examples of domain overlap confront students in contemporary society. For example, issues of peer inclusion and exclusion are very much a part of the everyday life of students. Instances of peer exclusion and harassment draw upon conceptions of peer conventions of dress and behavior, personal domain construals of the selection of personal associations and friendships, and moral concepts of harm and fairness (Horn, 2003; Killen, Lee-Kim, McGlothlin, & Stangor 2002; Killen & Rutland, 2011). According to domain theory, how an individual will reason about such issues of overlap will depend partly upon whether the person subordinates the given situation to a single domain of fairness, social organization, or personal considerations, or whether the person attempts to coordinate the elements of the issue (Turiel & Smetana, 1984). From an educational point of view, what these examples make clear is that facilitating social and moral growth addressing the full complexity of social and moral issues requires attention to a multi-faceted system of social and moral development rather than a single structure of moral judgment (Nucci, 2001).

DOMAIN THEORY: APPLICATION TO MORAL EDUCATION

The application of domain theory to moral education has been continuous with the broader family of developmental and constructivist approaches to education (Nucci, 2001). This includes attention to the social and emotional needs of children through classroom structure and responses to student behavior as well as the integration of moral education through the regular academic curriculum. Domain theory adds to existing developmentally based educational approaches a set of analytic tools for identifying moral and non-moral aspects of educational experiences along with domain appropriate teacher strategies for fostering moral and social development (Nucci, 2009). What follows is an overview of research findings about best practices for establishing a classroom climate of care and trust that are conducive to moral education, about developmental trends in student misbehavior and transgressions in the school-based context, and about domain appropriate teacher responses to student transgressions. The final subsection is a discussion of uses of domain theory to foster social and moral development through the academic curriculum.

Classroom and School Climate, Rules, and Responses to Transgression

Classroom climate. As was outlined above, moral and social knowledge emerges out of the child’s interactions in the social world. Applying this basic premise to the classroom
means that a fundamental source for students’ social development is the social climate of the classroom and school and the approach that teachers and administrators take toward managing student behavior. Research on the emotional correlates of morality by Arsenio and Lover (1995) sustains basic claims of the importance of attention to affective experiences for moral development. In particular, this work points to the centrality of establishing caring classroom environments (Noddings, 2002) that foster construction of a worldview based on “goodwill” characterized by the presumption that social life operates, for the most part, according to basic moral principles of fairness and mutual respect (Arsenio & Lover, 1995).

This is more than providing students with consistent moral messages in an environment of physical safety. As Noddings (2002) explains, critical to the establishment of a caring orientation is the capacity to accept care from others. This requires a school and classroom climate in which students can afford to be emotionally vulnerable and in which that vulnerability extends to the students’ willingness to risk engagement in acts of kindness and concern for others (Noddings, 2002). This notion of an ethic of care relates to a more general conceptualization of a school and classroom environment based upon trust (Watson, 2003, this volume). Trust entails affective connections of care regulated by moral reciprocity and continuity. Trust is basic to the construction of an overall sense of community that is one of the primary predictors of prosocial conduct in schools (Batistine, 2008).

One aspect of school culture that impacts the climate of trust is the extent to which students engage in social exclusion. Children’s engagement in social exclusion reflects a complex set of social judgments drawing on understandings across all three social cognitive domains. Issues of peer exclusion and harassment (and bullying) call upon conceptions of peer conventions of dress and behavior, personal domain construals of interpersonal associations and friendships, and moral concepts of harm and fairness (Horn, 2003; Killen et al., 2002). Establishing a climate of trust requires an inclusive classroom and school culture. However, focusing only on the fairness or harm involved in social exclusion will not address the motivations and justifications of young persons whose focus is on the importance of peer conventions or their sense of control over personal associations (Killen & Rutland, 2011). Addressing this complexity entails an open climate of dialogue in which children work through the non-moral justifications that are undergirding their willingness to engage in what would otherwise be perceived as an immoral act of interpersonal harm (Killen & Rutland, 2011).

Establishing classrooms and school communities that foster trust and mutual respect should extend beyond the elementary years that Watson (2003, this volume) identifies as a critical period for meeting the attachment needs of young children. Discussed in greater detail below, adolescence is a period of transition with its own emotional vulnerabilities that make establishing an atmosphere of trust important for secondary education as well (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998). The broader process of establishing trust in school is beyond the scope of this chapter and is covered in several other places in the handbook (see esp. Watson, this volume). We now turn to ways in which attention to social cognitive domain can contribute to an understanding of age-related shifts in student behavior and to the approach that educators might take concerning school rules and classroom management.

**Domain Appropriate Responses to Student Transgressions.** The emergence of distinct domains of social knowledge corresponds to qualitatively differing social interactions
associated with each domain (Turiel, 1983). As one might expect, research demonstrates that children evaluate teacher responses to transgressions in terms of correspondence to the domain of the transgressions (see Nucci, 2001 for a comprehensive review). Interview studies conducted with preschool (Killen, Breton, Ferguson, & Handler, 1994) and elementary and middle school children in grades 2–7 (Nucci, 1984) indicate that students evaluate teacher responses to transgressions in terms of their concordance with the domain-defining features of the actions. Domain concordant responses to violations of conventions, such as being out of line or not raising one’s hand before speaking, would consist of teacher statements referring to the governing rules or of statements engaging students to consider the disruptions to classroom organization or social functioning that result from the transgressions. Directing students to consider the consequences of such actions upon the welfare of others, on the other hand, would be responses concordant with moral transgressions. Students across grade levels were found to rate domain concordant responses higher than they rated domain discordant ones (e.g., providing a moral response to a conventional transgression) (Killen et al., 1994; Nucci, 1984). Fifth graders and above extended their evaluations of responses to transgression such that teachers who consistently responded to transgressions in a domain concordant manner were rated more knowledgeable and effective than teachers who consistently provided domain discordant responses (Nucci, 1984).

Observational studies of the relative frequency of rule violations in first- through eighth-grade classrooms have consistently indicated that the vast majority of misconduct is with respect to violations of conventions rather than moral transgressions (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, & Hamilton, 1987; Nucci & Nucci, 1982a). This indicates that attributing all classroom management issues to morality runs the risk of diminishing the force of moral argumentation by using it primarily for issues of convention. This limits the extent to which classroom interactions can be employed to engage students’ thinking about convention.

School Rules, Misbehavior, and Periods of Transition. The importance of attending to students’ concepts of social convention becomes more apparent when we consider data indicating that the rate at which students engage in violations of classroom convention is associated with students’ modal level of development in the conventional domain. Violations of convention in elementary and middle school are highest in grades 3–4 and 7–8, which correspond to ages at which children are respectively at Levels 2 and 4, negation of concepts about convention (Nucci & Nucci, 1982a; see Table 8.1). As one might expect from the developmental literature, early adolescence is an especially challenging period for teachers and administrators because significant changes are occurring in all three domains of social understanding.

With respect to social convention, young adolescents enter a phase (Level 4) in which they question the conventions they upheld during middle childhood (Nucci et al., 2004; Turiel, 1983). The support for conventions of maintaining basic order (e.g., to keep kids from running in the hallways) evaporates as young people reconsider the arbitrariness of conventional regulation and conclude that they are “simply the arbitrary dictates of authority” (Turiel, 1983). In many cases, students at this level of development continue to adhere to conventions to maintain smooth relationships with teachers or to avoid sanctions. However, students at this level are unable to produce a conceptual rationale for the conventions themselves (Nucci et al., 2004). Thus, there is greater tendency for students at this point in development to engage in the violation of school conventions (Geiger & Turiel, 1983; Nucci & Nucci, 1982a).
By middle adolescence, about age 15 or the sophomore year of high school, most American adolescents have moved to Level 5 reasoning about social convention (Nucci et al., 2004). At Level 5, conventions are viewed as constituent elements of the social system structuring hierarchical relations and coordinating interactions among members of a society or a societal institution such as the school (Turiel, 1983). In their longitudinal study, Geiger and Turiel (1983) found that students who had moved to Level 5 in their concepts of convention engaged in significantly fewer violations of school conventions.

Coincident with these developmental shifts in concepts of convention are basic changes in the ways that adolescents draw boundaries between convention and matters of personal prerogative and privacy (Smetana, 2011). Areas where conventions and norms of family and school touch upon personal expression (dress, hairstyle), personal associations (friendships), personal communication (phone, email), access to information (internet), and personal safety (substance use, sexuality) become zones of dispute wherein adolescents lay increasing claims to autonomy and control. Across cultures, family disputes are largely about such issues as adolescents appropriating greater areas of personal jurisdiction from what had previously been areas of parental influence or control (Smetana, 2011). Students also lay claim to zones of personal privacy and prerogative within school settings (Smetana & Bitz, 1996). They are somewhat more willing, however, to accept conventions regulating conduct within the school settings such as public displays of affection (kissing in public) that would be considered personal in non-school contexts (Smetana & Bitz, 1996). Nevertheless, the combined developmental phase of negation of convention with the extension of what is considered personal renders the period of early adolescence a difficult transition.

In discussing educational implications of this period of early adolescent transition, Smetana (2005) refers to the work of Eccles and her colleagues as providing a window into the mismatch that currently exists between school policies and adolescent acceptance of these normative issues. The researchers (Eccles et al., 1993, 1998) have provided evidence that, despite the increased maturity of adolescents, middle and junior high schools emphasize greater teacher control and discipline and offer fewer opportunities for student involvement in decision-making, choice, and self-management than do elementary school classrooms. Accordingly, Eccles and her colleagues (1998) reported that the mismatch between adolescents’ efforts to attain greater autonomy and the schools’ increased efforts at control result in declines in junior high school students’ intrinsic motivation and interest in school.

From a developmental perspective, the typical responses of schools to this period of transition amount to a defensive maneuver while waiting out a passing developmental storm. An alternative approach recommended by Eccles (Eccles et al., 1993, 1998) is that schools include more opportunities for students to have input into the norms governing classroom practices. More specifically, Smetana’s (Smetana & Bitz, 1996) research and the observational studies of student transgressions (Geiger & Turiel, 1983; Nucci & Nucci, 1982a) indicate that the focus of such student input and discourse should be around matters of social convention and personal prerogative. Other work exploring the impact of developmental discourse around issues of convention has demonstrated that such discussion can effectively contribute to students’ levels of understanding about the social functions of such norms (Nucci & Weber, 1991).
While the majority of adolescent misconduct concerns issues of convention, some of the efforts to establish autonomy and identity entail risk taking and moral transgressions. For example, shoplifting tends to peak between the ages of 12 and 14 years (Wolf, 1992). This corresponds to the transitional period in early adolescent moral reasoning uncovered in our recent work (Nucci, 2013a; Nucci & Turiel, 2007). The Swiss developmentalist Fritz Oser (2005) has argued that educators should view such moral misconduct as an essential component for moral growth and seize upon moral transgressions as an opportunity for what he refers to as “realistic discourse.” Oser’s position is that “negative morality,” like mistakes in math class, comprises the basis from which a genuine moral epistemology and moral orientation arise. His approach to moral misconduct in adolescence is to make it the subject of moral discourse in which students must confront one another’s actual misdeeds, interpretations of their motives, and the consequences of their actions (Veugelers & Oser, 2003). Oser’s approach builds from prior work done in the Kohlberg tradition on the “just community” (see Oser, this volume). The processes advocated by Oser have been employed with considerable success by others working within the Kohlberg tradition (Blakeney & Blakeney, 1991) to alter the misconduct and recidivism among behaviorally disordered children and adolescents.

Domain Appropriate Uses of the Academic Curriculum

Attending to students’ social experiences can contribute much to their social and moral development. However, schools can extend their impact upon moral and social development through the academic curriculum in several ways. First, the academic curriculum contains many instances in the context of literacy and social studies of stories or events that replicate or reinforce social and moral values that students may be addressing in their everyday experiences. Uses of literature employing constructivist teaching methods with attention to children’s developmental levels has been shown to impact both social and emotional learning (Elias et al., this volume) as well as moral development (Nucci, 2001, 2009). Second, the formal curriculum moves the students’ knowledge base beyond their own historical or cultural framework and has the potential to motivate students to project themselves as members of a global community with responsibilities for the social welfare of persons beyond their immediate experience. Table 8.1 presents an outline of how curricular content in literature and social studies might be matched with domain and developmental level corresponding to grade and approximate ages.

Developmentalists dating back to Kohlberg (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972) have cast the aims of moral education in progressive terms of enabling individuals to evaluate society and their own behavior from a critical principled moral perspective. For Kohlberg, this aim was to be achieved by stimulating students to move toward principled stages of moral reasoning. From a domain theory perspective, this same progressive aim is strived for by fostering student skills to apply their moral understandings critically to evaluate social norms and personal conduct at all points in development rather than at a developmental end point (Nucci, 2001, 2009). In both cases, the underlying progressive educational ideology has a shared concept of moral education as fostering the capacity of students to act from a critical moral perspective. This social justice potential of schools has received a lot of attention in recent years, some of it quite critical. Critics such as Diane Ravitch (2005) express a concern that attention to moral issues such as social class or racial inequalities competes with the primary academic aims of education. Such criticisms might have merit if attention to moral development came at the cost of academic
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<th>Grade/Age</th>
<th>Moral</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
<th>Personal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten–Grade 2 5–7 years</td>
<td>Development: Recognize basic obligations for helping, sharing, avoiding harm. Difficulty coordinating needs of more than one person simultaneously. Moral decisions based on salience of moral elements. Curriculum: Reading as context presenting conflicts of interest between two or more characters. Engage students in generating resolutions based on moral reciprocity.</td>
<td>Development: Conventions tied to observed regularities; conform to general patterns. Curriculum: Use stories to identify contextual variations in conventions. <em>Emphasis in early grades (K-4) on direct experiences with classroom and family norms.</em></td>
<td>Development: Control over personal tied to physical aspects of self. Identity and autonomy shown in appearance to others. Autonomy as literal ownership and control over “self.” Curriculum: Readings present protagonists engaging in choices about clothing, etc. to illustrate identity. Differentiate contexts in which personal choice and conventions prevail.</td>
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<td>Grades 3–4 8–9 years</td>
<td>Development: Direct reciprocity; tit-for-tat mentality; indirect harm same as direct harm; equal distribution is fair. Curriculum: Reading as context for deepening morality based on reciprocity and coordination of needs of two or more people.</td>
<td>Development: Negation of convention based on observed inconsistencies and exceptions to norms. Curriculum: Reading and social studies as contexts for discussions about impact on social order and behavior of altering or eliminating conventions presented in historical or fictional settings.</td>
<td>Development: Transition toward features of grade 5. Curriculum: Reading instruction as context for identifying and discussing role of personal choices of <em>activities</em> in establishing identity.</td>
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<td>Grades 5–6 10–11 years</td>
<td>Development: Concerns for equity, others’ special needs taken into account. Beginnings of attention to non-moral factors adding complexity to moral situations. Curriculum: Reading as context for discussion about equity in fair distribution and opportunities for participation. Discuss fairness of social exclusion (can be linked to personal domain and identity). Use social studies to begin consideration of social equity.</td>
<td>Development: Affirmation and concrete understanding of conventional rules to maintain order and given top-down by social authority figure. Curriculum: Reading and social studies to consider role of conventions in establishing social organization. Social studies make concrete comparisons of the role conventions in different social systems.</td>
<td>Development: Emphasis of self-definition is about child’s displayed behaviors, talents, and skills. Control over personal allows behaviors and activities that define self. Curriculum: Reading for discussing relation between personal choice and identity. Discuss connections between proficiency in personal activities and sense of self. Essential to minimize comparisons with others as basis for academic motivation.</td>
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Grades 7–9 12–14 years

Development: Consolidate relations between equity and equality in concepts of fairness; attention to factors of ambiguity and complexity in moral situations. Conflation of personal choice with "rights"; increased non-moral action choices in ambiguous contexts.

Curriculum: Literacy – consider indirect, ambiguous harm; evaluate arguments about moral decisions based on self-interest that entail competing interests and ambiguous harm. Use social studies to evaluate historical events with actors engaged in actions entailing moral ambiguity. Begin discussions of moral considerations of social practices and conventions.

Grades 10–12 15–17 years

Development: Increased ability to coordinate multiple factors in moral situations. Clear differentiation between personal choice and moral rights.

Curriculum: Use literacy and history to prompt discussions and essays about situations pitting moral considerations against societal convention and personal interest. Use moral considerations to evaluate the norms and practices of social systems. Emphasis on cross-domain coordinations. Apply moral considerations to personal decisions on global warming, etc.

Development: Negation of convention as arbitrary dictates of authority; acts evaluated apart from rules.

Curriculum: Use social studies for discussion, reflection, and essays about conventions associated with social hierarchy and organization. Consider historical and societal conventions and their role in variations on social systems. Discuss construction of norms for hypothetical social systems; compare with social systems presented in social studies.

Development: Systematic concepts of social structure emerge; conventions understood as normative and binding to maintain social systems and reflect social organization and hierarchy; social group members expected to adhere to conventions.

Curriculum: Use literature and social studies for comparative examination of societies as normative systems. Connect with moral considerations of respect for cultural differences.

Development: Self is described as one’s beliefs, values, and thoughts. Control over personal is to maintain “uniqueness” in terms of superficial differences from others. Early adolescent expands activities and decisions considered “personal” and not a matter of parental or other external authority.

Curriculum: Use literature to consider relations between personal decisions about dress, friends, activities, etc. in generating individuality. Discussions: What it means to be individual versus “phony”; whether two people can share the same values, beliefs, and preferences and remain individuals.
success. In fact, there is mounting evidence that attention to social and moral development may enhance academic performance (Berkowitz & Bier, this volume; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Finally, encouraging students to employ moral knowledge to improve society is a goal broadly shared by educators, including proponents of mainstream character education (Lickona, 2004).

We have begun to examine the efficacy of attending to social cognitive domain within the context of academic instruction (Nucci, 2009). In one of our studies, we addressed whether attention to the domain of social values makes a difference in the development of children’s moral and social conventional concepts addressed in a set of eighth-grade American History and English composition courses (Nucci & Weber, 1991). We identified issues from American history that were primarily moral, social conventional, or mixed domain. For example, moral issues included slavery and the forced removal of Native Americans from their lands; conventional issues included the adjustments in modes of dress, work conventions, and dating patterns that resulted from the influx of immigrants and the shift from an agrarian to an industrial society; and mixed domain issues included changes in laws permitting women to vote.

Students were randomly assigned to one of three instructional conditions: (a) convention, (b) moral, and (c) domain appropriate. Instruction was carried out by an experienced teacher in pullout sessions supplementing their regular classroom activities. Each instructional period included 30 minutes of discussion and an essay homework assignment based upon the questions used to frame each session. Students in the convention condition were provided questions and teacher statements that directed them to focus upon social norms and social organization, in essence treating all issues as if they were matters of convention. Students in the moral condition were directed to treat these same issues in terms of considerations of fairness and social justice. Students in the domain appropriate condition were asked first to consider normative, conventional aspects and then to consider the justice or welfare features of the issue. Students in the domain appropriate condition were also asked to integrate the moral and conventional features of the event. In other words, students were taught to interpret, analyze, and evaluate situations as primarily social, moral, or mixed. Results indicated that attention to domain had an impact on student learning.

Students who received instruction focusing in only one domain (social conventional or moral) advanced in their level of reasoning or understanding in that domain but not in the other. Only the students in the domain appropriate (mixed social conventional and moral) instructional condition developed in both domains. A second noteworthy finding of the study had to do with how students dealt with overlapping issues. Students who had domain appropriate teaching were the only ones to coordinate elements spontaneously from both domains. In contrast, two thirds of the students in the moral instructional condition subordinated mixed domain issues entirely to their moral elements, and a majority of students in the convention instructional condition subordinated mixed domain issues to their conventional elements.

This last set of findings has particular relevance for developing students’ capacities for critical moral reflection. Convention condition students were hampered in attending to the moral implications of situations. Moral condition students prioritized the moral elements of the same situations but did not consider the social organizational ramifications. In real life, however, there are always organizational costs to any change in the conventional social structure. For example, a single-minded attention to needs for
gender equality in careers leaves unanswered any number of practical questions about how to restructure the conventions of the family, role expectations, and practical duties. The domain appropriate condition students prioritized the moral elements of these situations, but they also acknowledged the ramifications of changing conventional organization and offered suggestions for how those changes might be resolved. Our interpretation of the findings from this study is that instructional conditions that differentially draw attention to social conventional, moral, or mixed-domain components of the same issues can influence students’ capacities to coordinate and transfer forms of reasoning through social cognitive domains about multifaceted, value-laden, real-world issues.

Findings from instructional intervention studies such as the study presented above demonstrate how social cognitive domain theory approaches to moral education can inform and enhance teaching practices that build and coordinate conceptual structures. Using these constructed understandings, students reason about social-conventional and moral issues and events in both real life and within the academic curriculum. Social cognitive domain theory provides a 2-for-1 framework that aligns with and adds greater dimension to formative and performance-driven academic standards. It supports instruction that fosters intellectual, social, and moral development simultaneously by building upon higher-order reasoning skills that transfer across academic disciplines (Nucci, 2009). Thus, this approach to moral education addresses the concerns of schools for academic achievement noted by Davidson and Lickona (this volume) while also contributing to students’ moral development.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This chapter provided an overview of research on children’s moral and social development indicating that morality forms a developmental system that is distinct from our concepts of societal convention and personal choice and privacy. That research provides the basis for refinements in the developmental approach to moral education that attends to the contextual and experiential origins of students’ concepts in each domain rather than subsuming social and moral development within a single developmental system. Observational studies have demonstrated that classroom social interactions differ by social cognitive domain, and interview studies have shown that students evaluate teacher responses to students’ social transgressions in terms of their concordance with the domain of the transgression. Finally, intervention studies have demonstrated that attending to social cognitive domain has salutary effects both on students’ development within domains and in their tendencies to integrate knowledge from multiple domains when dealing with complex social issues.

In recent work, we have integrated this developmental research into the design of a teacher education program for the preparation of elementary school teachers. That effort has demonstrated that pre-service teachers can acquire the skills to integrate lessons of domain appropriate moral and social values with the regular academic curriculum and their approach to classroom management (Nucci, Drill, Larson, & Browne, 2005; Nucci, 2013b; Nucci & Powers, 2013). We continue to assess the degree to which pre-service teachers trained in the Developmental Teacher Education (DTE) program at the University of California, Berkeley integrate and continue to use methods and guiding concepts of social cognitive domain theory in their classrooms (Nucci & Powers, 2013). We are also currently exploring how urban public middle school history teachers with
varying levels of professional experience foster students’ development of conventional and moral reasoning. In this ongoing project, teachers plan lessons and deliver instruction guided by a social cognitive domain approach.

Our goal in conducting this research has been to provide educators and educational researchers with insights to improve their developmentally based moral and social education rather than to promote a specific set of practices or curricula. There are undoubtedly many ways in which classroom teachers and school administrators can integrate attention to moral and social development within educational practices that go beyond the suggestions that we have proposed (Nucci, 2009). What is critical from our point of view is that moral education acknowledges the complexity inherent in social and moral decision-making and in the construction of a moral life. What we have learned in the past four decades about children’s moral and social development is that moral education requires a variegated approach. Moral development does not move toward an end-point at which moral principle triumphs over non-moral considerations. Nor does moral education result in the establishment of decontextualized virtue. Instead, what we can hope to accomplish is to develop young people capable of handling moral complexity, ambiguity, and contradiction in ways that will help them to lead moral lives and to construct a more moral society.

REFERENCES


Nucci, L., & Turiel, E. (2007). Development in the moral domain: The role of conflict and relationships in children’s and adolescents’ welfare and harm judgments. Paper presented as part of the symposium “Moral development within domain and within context” at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Boston, MA.


